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Obey Meets with Cranberry Growers

Federal Grant For Cranberry Research

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WI – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) was in Wisconsin Rapids today to meet with cranberry growers at the Ocean Spray processing plant and to hear about industry plans for expansion and growth in coming years.

“In these tough economic times, it is wonderful to hear about a Wisconsin industry that is doing well,” Obey said.

“These are exciting and profitable times for the cranberry industry,” Obey said, “and we want to keep it going. That’s why the federal government is partnering with the industry with investments in research into genetics, pest management, and new technologies that will help growers implement new practices to protect and enhance the water resources.”

Earlier this year, Obey and Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) teamed up to include \$1.25 million in the budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for cranberry research, the first time such research funds for cranberries have been included in the federal budget.

With a record harvest of 446 million pounds last year and another bumper crop this year, Wisconsin is responsible for about 60% of the harvest nationwide and about half of all the cranberries in the world. Despite record production, which in the past has meant low prices, Wisconsin growers are also anticipating record returns due to growing demand, not just for seasonal sellers such as cranberry sauce and traditional products such as cranberry juice, but also for relatively new products such as sweetened, dried cranberries and new cranberry-based energy drinks.

One of the brightest prospects for new growth in demand for cranberries comes from international sales, such as a new agreement Ocean Spray entered into with Coca Cola to distribute drinks in Britain and France. Cranberry exports have increased by nearly 18 percent in the last year.

“The benefits from this investment into cranberry research can be expected to pay back these funds many times over in terms of both preservation of the resources and future economic returns to the region and the State of Wisconsin,” Obey said. “I’m glad that I’ve been able to help out an increasingly important part of Wood County and central Wisconsin’s economic infrastructure.”

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